DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 908 PS 029 608

AUTHOR Zuberi, Tukufu
TITLE African American Men, Inequality and Family Structure: A Research Note.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. National Center on Fathers and Families.
SPONS AGENCY Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.; Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, MI.
REPORT NO WP-98-12C
PUB DATE 1998-12-00
NOTE 20p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Center on Fathers and Families, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, 3440 Market Street, Suite 450, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3325. Tel: 215-573-5500; Fax: 215-573-5508; e-mail: mailbox@ncoff.gse.upenn.edu; Web site: http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Birth Rate; *Black Family; Disadvantaged; *Economic Factors; Ethnic Groups; *Family Financial Resources; *Family Structure; *Fathers; Marital Status; Parent Role; Public Policy; Racial Discrimination; *Racial Factors; Research Needs
IDENTIFIERS *African Americans; Stratification

ABSTRACT

Research into the social history of African American men in deteriorating socioeconomic conditions has enhanced the understanding of the family. This research helps to understand the different experiences of diverse groups within the society and different group reactions to social change. Yet, social scientists and policymakers have shown a remarkable lack of vision when it comes to anticipating the future impact of urban life on African American family structure. Signs of this future, such as single-parent households, have been attributed to moral decline associated with the stresses that accompany city life and the changing labor and market conditions. A dramatic transformation in conjugal patterns and the family context of births has taken place among African Americans during the past half century. It is argued that the role of African American men in the family must be placed in a broader context. In the past, researchers have attributed African American family deterioration to the problem of male employment and welfare. The available evidence justifies renewed attention to the connection between family disintegration and inequality. African American men appear to have less ability to pull their children out of the lower ebbs of the economy. More research needs to focus on how the lack of resources among African American families has affected family relationships across the income spectrum. (Contains 37 references.) (Author/KB)

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WP-98-12C
December 1998

by

Tukufu Zuberi
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Commissioned by the

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PREFACE

Not since the 1960s and 1970s—when research in the field was at a peak—have family issues captured as much attention or sparked as much wide-scale debate as they have in recent years. Casting its net to address a variety of problems that fall outside the typical domains of psychology and sociology (where much of the early work was located), research on families is part of a growing interdisciplinary focus which is no longer simply implicated in questions about family development. Rather, the present interdisciplinary focus of the field attempts to respond to massive changes in the needs, structures, poverty levels, and formation patterns of families and the policies that are designed to remedy the increasingly complex problems they face.

A significant and compelling part of research on families over the past 20 years explores the impact of father involvement and father absence on children's development and complements much of the existing research on issues in other areas—e.g., female-headed households, poverty, social welfare, and public policy. In particular, the potential impact of family support legislation, national welfare reform agendas, and persistent systemic problems at local and state levels lends a sense of urgency to the research discussion about father participation in families. What is noticeably lacking in these discussions, however, is a focus on programs that serve fathers and families and the voices of practitioners.

The issues defining and surrounding research and practice on fathers and families are complex. Nested in each issue are multiple layers of questions about the problems facing young fathers, mothers, and families; the needs of programs and the practitioners who work in them; changes in national, state, and local policies; and the nature of the tasks facing society. Although there is substantial discussion about the impact of father absence, research studies provide only modest evidence for the negative consequences of father absence on children and typically attribute these negative effects to reduced family income resulting from separation or divorce. There are only sparse data on families that deviate from "traditional, intact" family forms such as families headed by adolescent or young, adult never-married, and/or poor mothers. Research on families of color, outside of poverty studies, is still conspicuously meager in the knowledge base.

The work of the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) uses the strengths and voids in these research discussions as a launching pad to develop a framework for research, practice, and policy—to promote the building of a field in which the needs of children and families are the core of the discourse and research and practice cohere to craft the language and activities associated with that discourse. NCOFF aims to bring together these issues within a research and collaborative effort on behalf of children and their families.

Established in July 1994 with core funding from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, NCOFF's mission is to improve the life chances of children and the efficacy of families by facilitating the effective involvement of fathers. Developed in the spirit of the Philadelphia

Children's Network's (PCN) motto, "Help the children. Fix the system.", NCOFF seeks to increase and enrich the possibilities for children, ensuring that they are helped and that the system allows for and encourages the participation of fathers in their children's lives. NCOFF shares with PCN and other field activities the premises that children need loving, nurturing families; that mothers and families in general need to be supported in providing nurturance; and that family support efforts should increase the ability of both parents and adults within and outside the biological family to contribute to children's development and well-being.

NCOFF's mission is developed around seven *Core Learnings*. The Core Learnings provide the context for NCOFF's research agenda. This research agenda is intended to support the field in the development, conduct, and advancement of research, practice, and responsive policies. Research activities are designed to synthesize work from multiple disciplines, provide current analyses, and examine emerging conceptualizations in the field. In this and all of its work, NCOFF recognizes that the scope of need in the field requires a variety of approaches and the commitment and collective effort of different communities.

This Monograph is intended to highlight critical and emerging topics in the field that have received minimal attention and that complement issues identified in the NCOFF FatherLit Database, Briefs, critical literature reviews, and research reports. The Database combines citation lists, annotated bibliographies, and abstracts of research articles, reports, and volumes that focus on issues implied in the Core Learnings. All NCOFF documents are written and reviewed by scholars representing multiple disciplines and research interests in fathers and families. Information about the NCOFF Database, the literature reviews and analyses, working papers, and other NCOFF documents and activities is currently available on HandsNet and through our website.

Embedded in NCOFF's mission is a vision in which fathers, families, and communities are positioned to ensure the well-being of children and are able to translate their hope and the possibilities that accompany that hope into human and social prosperity. A well-coordinated national effort on fathers and families will give support and a collective voice to programs, encourage research, and contribute to responsive policy formulation. Such a vehicle would provide the appropriate context for experience-sharing among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers; identification of basic research, program, and policy-related issues; surfacing of new research issues; and increased opportunities for communication, cooperation, and collaboration.

Vivian L. Gadsden
Director

SEVEN CORE LEARNINGS

- Fathers care — even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.
- Father presence matters — in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.
- Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement.
- Existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment operate to create systemic obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed "underground fathers"—men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems.
- A growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills to share the responsibility for parenting.
- The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant development implications for young fathers.
- The behaviors of young parents, both fathers and mothers, are influenced significantly by intergenerational beliefs and practices within families of origin.

The seven Core Learnings are at the heart of NCOFF's agenda for research, practice, and policy and are a framework for the field. They represent the knowledge and experience of practitioners who confront complex problems facing fathers and families and are consistent with research across multiple disciplines. They offer an important lens through which policymakers might learn more about the implications and impact of legislation and policy decisions on the lives of large numbers of fathers, mothers, children, and families. Within them are captured salient issues experienced and felt deeply by a range of fathers and families—from those who are financially secure to those who are the most vulnerable to poverty and hardship.

The Core Learnings were identified immediately prior to NCOFF's inception by frontline practitioners in a series of survey and focus group activities conducted by the Philadelphia Children's Network and NCOFF. Formulated first as seven hypotheses drawn from practitioners' experiences in programs serving fathers and families, each hypothesis was tested against existing published research and policy studies. As each hypothesis was borne out in the literature, it became a Core Learning. A library of information was developed for each. The resultant seven libraries now constitute the NCOFF FatherLit Database and include over 7,000 citations, annotations, and abstracts of research, available in written, diskette, and electronic form.

African American Men, Inequality and Family Structure: A Research Note

by Tukufu Zuberi (Antonio McDaniel)

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Abstract

Research into the social history of African American men in deteriorating socioeconomic conditions has enhanced our understanding of the family. This research has helped us understand the different experiences of diverse groups within the society and different group reactions to social change. Yet, social scientists and policymakers have shown a remarkable lack of vision when it comes to anticipating the future impact of urban life on African American family structure. Signs of this future, such as single-parent households, have been attributed to moral decline associated with the stresses that accompany city life and the changing labor and market conditions. A dramatic transformation in conjugal patterns and the family context of births has taken place among African Americans during the past half century. The author argues that the role of African American men in the family must be placed in a broader context. In the past researchers have attributed African American family deterioration to the problem of male employment and welfare. The available evidence justifies renewed attention to the connection between family disintegration and inequality. African American men appear to have less of an ability to pull their children out of the lower ebbs of the economy. More research needs to focus on how the lack of resources among African American families has affected family relationships across the income spectrum.

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) is a policy research center that is practice-focused and practice-derived. Based in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, NCOFF's mission is to improve the life chances of children and the efficacy of families by facilitating the effective involvement of fathers in caring for, supporting, and advocating on behalf of their children. NCOFF's research plan is developed around seven "Core Learnings," distilled from the experiences of programs and agencies serving fathers, mothers, and children around the country.

NCOFF activities are funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Mott Foundation.

About the Author

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African American Men, Inequality and Family Structure: A Research Note

by Tukufu Zuberi

Introduction

Research into the social history of African American men in deteriorating socioeconomic conditions has enhanced our understanding of the family. This research has helped us understand the different experiences of various groups within the society and different group reactions to social change. Each racial group within the United States has a unique historical experience and cultural background. Social distinctions based on racial differences are related to these historical and cultural differences, and they continue to influence how we view racial differences in family structure.

As early as the 1950s and 1960s E. Franklin Frazier and Daniel Patrick Moynihan presented a forceful argument relating African American poverty to family structure and sounded the alarm that the absence of African American men among poor families was catastrophic and growing.[1] Moynihan underlined the need to address these problems with programs that would "eliminate poverty wherever it exists."[2] Moynihan argued that the national effort to assist the African American population should be directed toward fixing African American family structure. His idea was that once family structure was strengthened African Americans would be able to raise and support members "as do other families"(47). Although, Moynihan cited Frazier he may have misunderstood the significance of Frazier's conclusions. Fifteen years before the publication of Moynihan's monumental study E. Franklin Frazier argued:

> As the result of family disorganization a large proportion of Negro children and youth have not undergone the socialization which only the family can provide. The disorganized families have failed to provide for their emotional needs and have not provided the discipline and habits which are necessary for personality development. Because the disorganized family has failed in its function as a socializing agency, it has handicapped the children in their relations to the institutions in the community. Moreover, family disorganization has been partially responsible for a large amount of juvenile delinquency and adult crime among Negroes. Since the widespread family disorganization among Negroes has resulted from the failure of the father to play the role in family life required by American society, the mitigation of this problem must await those changes in the Negro and American society which will enable the Negro father to play the role required of him.[3]

Unlike Moynihan, Frazier was keenly aware of the need to change American society. As the quote above indicates Moynihan focused on the need to change the African American population. Like Moynihan, Frazier presented a solution that was based on assimilation. Both Moynihan and Frazier underestimated the impact of racial stratification on the economic status of African American children. Past research on the role of African American men and family structures have focused on the relationship between family instability, poverty, employment patterns, and income transfers. The recent trend among scholars to neglect the role of racial stratification is questionable. To broaden our perspective family research must gain a better understanding of how assimilation and racial stratification operate.

The assimilation, or historical emulative,

perspective is evident in most of the quantitative research on the African family. However, considerable criticism of this perspective has developed. Underlying much of the research on this topic is a negative view towards the norms of the African community in the United States. Even the appearance of similar patterns is not necessarily evidence of normative behavior in both groups nor is the appearance of difference evidence that one is normative and the other deviant. Out of this critique has come research that examines the relative differences between the groups at *two* levels.[4] The first level looks at the African American family from the perspective of the cultural context of the African American community. This level of research is most clearly exemplified by the historical works of Blassingame (1972) and Gutman (1976) and the studies of contemporary African life by Stack (1974), Shimkin et al. (1978), Sudarkasa (1981), and Billingsley (1992). The second level investigates the differences and similarities between the two populations using quantitative data. The historical work of Gordon and McLanahan (1991), and the work at the Populations Studies Center[5] and by others[6] exemplify this type of research. Gutman's study (1976) is one of the few studies from the developmental perspective that has examined data at both levels in the past.

Compared with Europeans, African households were more likely to be extended. African women continue to be more likely than European women to head families and to have children who were not living with them. In fact, it appears that the family structure of the African population was much more fluid than that of the European population. This difference reflects crucial differences in the economic, cultural, and demographic situations of the two populations. Current household structures differ in a similar although more extreme manner than in the past.

Finally, there may be distinctly different responses between Europeans and Africans to poverty or prosperity. Social isolation and social and economic restrictions may have reinforced African traditions and customs, thereby reinforcing existing differences. Unfortunately, those same factors may have also served to reinforce African American exclusion and thereby increased the inferior social conditions of their community. Nevertheless, both fosterage and the extended family should be viewed as rational responses to economic pressures in light of a cultural background in which those family forms have been accepted practices.

This paper explores the role of African American men in the family. My strategy will be as follows. First, I briefly outline two perspectives on racial difference: assimilation and racial stratification. Second, I reflect on the trends in African American marriage rates. I then discuss children living with their fathers and children born to unmarried mothers. I then return to a discussion of the role of men in family structure, taking into consideration inequality. I conclude this analysis by exploring the impact of racial stratification on family structure.

Assimilation versus Racial Stratification

Assimilation and racial stratification are processes that take place when racial populations are socially defined and come into contact within a particular society. Assimilation is a gradual process in which one set of cultural traits and historical genealogy is relinquished and a new set are acquired through participation in the dominant mainstream culture. Racial stratification is the process of using race as a factor in the allocation of resources and power in a society. Both Assimilation and racial stratification can operate simultaneously.

In the United States, the population of European descent constitutes the majority, and, because they are the majority, researchers have viewed European American family behavior as the standards by which other groups should judge their own behavior.[7] The development of this idea has occurred within a social context where non-European American behavior is seen as deviant. The role of men as the leaders of the family is essential to this perspective and African American men have served as a model of what happens when men are not the leaders of the family. Recent research has begun to challenge the assumption that

assimilation should be a goal, and to posit that understanding the role of African American men requires an understanding of racial stratification.

Assimilation envisions a transformation of several different cultures into a single culture. Most family research in racially stratified societies like the United States has assumed that assimilation applies to all population groups equally. The racial stratification perspective actually enhances our understanding of assimilation as a social process. The ability of a group to be assimilated depends on whether it is considered an ethnic or racial group.[8] Assimilation is usually race specific. Racial assimilation implies that different ethnic groups assimilate into particular races, and ethnic assimilation occurs among groups considered ethnically different. For example, immigrants from Nigeria and Ghana have assimilated into the African American race, and immigrants from Sweden and Ireland have assimilated into the European American race. In the racial assimilation of an ethnic group, physical distinctions are overshadowed by the myth of cultural and historical similarities. Ethnic groups such as those from Europe and segments of the Native American, Asian and Hispanic populations show definite signs of assimilation; however, the African-origin population continues to be blocked from assimilation within the United States. In fact, the lack of assimilation of the African-origin population continues to be a major element of social differentiation within American society, and an indication of racial stratification.

The racial stratification perspective defines race as a socially constructed concept. Racial differences evoke somatic images that are related to social differences. Often these social differences are based on the concepts of ethnocentrism and social intolerance. Ethnocentrism is a social attitude that focuses on the virtue of a group's history and culture. It pits "us" against the "others" and is important for group glorification and solidarity. Social intolerance is social displeasure or resentment against a group that refuses to conform to the established practices and beliefs of a social group. A racially differentiated society characterized by both ethnocentrism and social intolerance is racially stratified.[9] The United States is a racially stratified society.

Getting Married

Family life is considered by many social scientists to be an important indicator of community development. A particularly troubling aspect of family life is a home without a resident father or husband. This concern dates back to W.E.B Du Bois' classic study *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. In Du Bois' eyes, the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia's "large number of homes without husbands," was a reflection of a high incidence of widowhood, separation, desertion, and unmarried motherhood. Du Bois traced the familial instability he saw evidenced in female-headed households to white racism and social dislocations. Particularly, he felt that familial instability resulted from slavery, which had prevented the formation of independent African American families, from the disruptive impact of migration to the city; and to the economic stresses of urban life, including the low wages of African men; and the "grave physical, economic, and moral disorder." Despite these factors, however, Du Bois ultimately saw the mass of African American families as moving toward what he termed "the stable marriage state," or perhaps more tellingly, "the monogamic ideal."[10]

Du Bois was one of the first scholars to connect social and economic position to family structure. Like E. Franklin Frazier, Patrick Moynihan and William Julius Wilson after him, Du Bois was convinced that given time and increased social and economic acceptance, the African American population would settle down and accommodate its behavior to the prevailing, that is, European American, model of family life.[11] Social scientists and policymakers have shown a remarkable lack of vision when it comes to anticipating the future impact of urban life on African American family structure. Signs of this future, such as single-parent households, have been attributed to moral decline associated with the stresses that accompany city life and the changing labor and market conditions. The recent trend in African American adult family life has been away

from the model of a household headed by a married couple.

African American families have a long history of significant numbers of children being raised in mother-only families. The majority of African American households with children are headed by women, and since the 1970s, the odds of an African American child living in a mother-headed household have more than doubled. Divorce has been more prevalent in African American families than in European American families, with African Americans showing a more fluid marriage pattern than that of European Americans both currently and historically.

The trend away from marriage is evident in the data presented in Table 1, which provides my estimates of African American conjugal conditions for 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990 using census data. These data illustrate the dramatic transformation in conjugal patterns that has taken place among African Americans during the past half century. The number of single men and women has increased substantially for the two youngest age groups, 20-29 and 30-39, while the number of married men and women has declined dramatically for all age groups. The number widowed, separated and divorced has declined especially among the aged (See Table 1).

This fluidity has created stepparents, stepsiblings and half-siblings, not to mention a multitude of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and fictive kin.

The trend away from marriage among African Americans does not reflect a turn to assimilation and intermarriage. The rates of interracial unions indicate the degree of assimilation between the various racial and ethnic groups. From these rates we note the closeness of European Americans regardless of ethnic identification. Asians, American Indians, and Hispanics also have high rates of interracial marriage with native-born European Americans, suggesting a process of assimilation. The lowest groups on the racial scale, African Americans, are the least assimilated. Among Hispanics, Puerto Ricans tend to have maintained their group differences and have relatively low rates of intermarriage.[12] With the exception of Puerto Ricans all the intermediate racial groups have had relatively greater degrees of success at "miscegenation" into European American society. The rate of interracial marriages is generally higher among second-generation populations than among their immigrant parents (Gurak and Fitzpatrick 1982; Lee and Yamanaka 1990).

Having a Baby

As marriage rates have dropped, so too have the proportion of African American children in two-parent families, as Figure 1 illustrates. In 1960, the majority — 66 percent — of African American children lived with two parents. By 1990, only 36 percent of African origin children lived in such families. Most African American children now live with only one parent (See Figure 1).

Usually the absence of fathers is considered the one of the main problems of single parent families. The majority of single parent families are female-headed. Whether to start a family and when to have children can be influenced by what men and women perceive to be their opportunities. One cannot deny the increasing persistent poverty of African American children in general and those born to single mothers in particular. However, we cannot expect to understand the increasing absence of African American fathers without placing their behavior within a social context. Fertility decisions are not made within the context of marriage decisions. The unprecedented increases in the proportion of African American children in a mother only family is a reflection of these changes.

The issue of "illegitimate births" is a good example of how value judgments have influenced research on fertility. Several generations of scholars have concluded that the legitimacy of a child is indisputably connected to the presence of the father.[13] The importance of a male presence in a household, and the disapproval of families without a male household head, is emphasized by Moynihan. Moynihan notes that "ours is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society

facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage."[14] Moynihan here is clearly suggesting that the African American population is in need of acculturation. This feature of human societies — that the presence of a father is required — has been considered as a "social law."

Despite this "social law," non-marital births have outnumbered marital births among African Americans since the early 1970s and the rates among European and African Americans have also increased substantially.[15] As the debate around the deviance of nonmarital fertility in the African American population increased, the actual difference between African and European American nonmarital fertility declined (see Figure 2). In fact, European American nonmarital fertility seems to be emulating that of African Americans (See Figure 2).

As the number of African American men who are married and living with their wives has decreased, so too has the percentage of never-married African American men. The rise in non-marital births and mother-headed households reflect the tendency for women to form households without being married to the father of their children. These combined factors have greatly increased the proportion of African American children in households without fathers. The changes in family structure, and the absence of African American men in households with children have become inextricably tied up with inequality.

Obstacles to Taking Care of the Family

Easterlin (1980) argued that men adjusted their marriage and fertility patterns in response to their feelings of economic security. That is, they compared their economic opportunities with those of their fathers. If they viewed their opportunities as being as attractive as their fathers' were, then they had more children. This would suggest more fertility control among African Americans than among European Americans. Butz and Ward (1979) emphasized the economic situation of men as well as the economic opportunities of women. The research that has examined these arguments has relied primarily on data for the European American population. And, the history of labor force participation and earnings have been quite different for African American men and women. In the future this line of research could be extended to the African American community.

Unlike this research, which takes the role of fathers as an important aspect of the community and family. African American fathers are typically discussed in research as absent members of the community. More recently the role of fathers in family processes has received more constructive attention. This change was clearly indicated in William J. Wilson's book, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, in which he identified African American male joblessness as the major source of African American "family disintegration" (Wilson 1987:106).

The paramount obstacle to many African American men in the financial rearing of their children is inequality. Declining marriage rates, increasing non-marital fertility rates, increasing single-parent families, comparative decline in female labor force participation rates, and increases in the proportion of African American men not in the labor force have all directly affected the well-being of children. Adding to the complexity of these changes is the structure of inequality. The consequence of changing family structure and inequality among children is a major social problem. The proportion of the national income distribution held by households with children has declined as the proportion of households with no children has increased.[16] Family research is enhanced by the examination of the impact of these changes on the income available for the rearing of children.

Understanding the income available to rear children requires us to estimate the apportionment of household income to each member.[17] Most African American children live in homes without a father. The absence of the father is thought to be a major cause of child disadvantage. The distribution of income available to African American children by household headship is presented in figure 3. Family structure differs

depending on economic position. Larger proportions of children in the lower deciles of the income distribution live in single-parent families, compared to the number of children above the fifth decile. Children living with two parents are more likely to be in the higher income deciles. Father-only and fostered children follow two-parent families in well-being as measured by the equivalent income distribution (See Figure 3).

In Figure 3, I have adjusted household income using equivalency scales to estimate family per-capita income for each child. Adjusted family income allows each child to be treated as though he or she received an income equivalent to the ratio of total household income divided by a measure of equivalency. I have estimated individual equivalent incomes for 1990 by family structure using the national distribution as the base. Family structure is defined as two parent, mother only, father only, and fostered families. Each line in this figure shows equivalent income for children at successive decile points in the income distribution. The black line for example, shows the equivalent income for children living in mother only households. The patterns of the distribution for African American children are overwhelmingly found among the lower deciles of the income distributions. This tabulation shows that African American children are relatively worst off regardless of family structure. Thus, children in two parent families are more likely to be found in the higher deciles; however, its impact does not alter the picture of racial stratification presented by a comparison of equivalent incomes by race presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 compares child income for children living in two-parent households by race. Figure 4 suggests that African American children are more at risk than European American children. In 1989, more than 60 percent of African American children living in two-parent households received incomes below the 5th decile of the distribution. European American children are primarily concentrated above the 5th decile. In terms of inequality, African American children suffer the most; however, not all of them suffer from income deprivation (See Figure 4).

The presence of men in African American households does not always translate into economic equality for African American children. The distribution of income available to children in two-parent African American households does not match that of European American children within the same type of households. African American children in father present households are over-represented among the less well off. The economic well being of all African American children is enhanced by the presence of fathers in the household.

These findings suggest that the role of African American men in the family must be placed in a broader context. The economic prospects of African American men are not good in the current market conditions. Consequently, the ability of African American fathers' income to make the difference in the distribution of income available for African American children is weaker than that of European American men. The ability to provide income by a class of individuals is not simply an individual process that can be addressed by looking at individual attributes. To properly understand the role of African American men as providers of income to their children requires that we understand the process of racial stratification.

Fight against Daddy

African Americans suffer from being among the most disadvantaged populations in American society. This disadvantage is a result of racial stratification. The research of Oliver and Shapiro (1997) underscores the legacy of barriers such as unfair banking practices to African American wealth accumulation at the individual and family level. Likewise, the research of Brimmer suggests that the same obstacles limit the formation of African American businesses.[18] This research documents how racial stratification has been part of the economic system of perpetuating racial differences in economic well being. Often when we think of racial stratification we envision the difficulties encountered by the marginalized race. In the United States this means that when we think of a racial problem we imagine how racism has limited the opportunities of African

Americans. Racial stratification has not only limited the opportunities for African Americans, but racial stratification has increased the opportunities for European Americans. Brimmer estimates the current cost of discrimination to be about 3.8 percent of the gross domestic product (or a whooping $204 billion).

The economic disadvantage among African American children, particularly those born to single mothers are an important problem. However, having a father does not automatically lift African American children out of disadvantaged economic situations. The economic statuses of African American children in intact families are inferior to those of European American families. The presence of fathers alone is not enough to transform the economic profile of children. Racial stratification is not simply a measure of the number of individuals in poverty. Racial stratification reflects the lack of equity in the society. African American children comprise a growing proportion of the economically disadvantaged population. Not only are jobs needed but policies that redress the inequity that exists in income and wealth are also needed.

In the past researchers have attributed African American family deterioration to the problem of male employment and welfare. I argue that the available evidence justifies renewed attention to the connection between family disintegration and inequality. It is not simply a question of being poor, but of how resources are distributed and the role of racial stratification in this distribution. More research needs to focus on how the lack of resources among African American families has affected family relationships. African American men appear to have less of an ability to pull their children out of the lower ebbs of the economy.

The focus on the earning capacity of fathers stems from the patriarchal assumption that human reproduction refers to the process of childbearing, and that the primary role of fathers is to provide material resources for survival. More recently we have come to recognize that "resource" may consist of more than simply providing income and wealth. Fathers may play a critical role in providing for the emotional needs of family members, especially children. Indeed both parents may be essential for personality development and in socializing children. A lack of proper socialization can lead to a misunderstanding of how to confront American society. Racial stratification requires that African American children be socialized to survive the institutional obstacles that perpetuate racial differences in social and economic well being.

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[15] Wilson, William Julius. (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: Table 3.2; Morgan, S. Philip. (1996). Characteristic Features of Modern American Fertility: A Description of Late Twentieth Century U.S. Fertility Trends and Differentials. *Population And Development Review*, Supplement to Vol. 22: Table 2.

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[17] As a preliminary illustration of this issue I suggest estimation of the distribution of inequality among persons. I estimate inequality by weighting each family member by the number of household members. I treat household members as a homogenous group. My estimates employ the method suggested by Karoly and Burtless (see Lynn a. Karoly and Gary Burtless 1995. Demographic Change, Rising Earnings Inequality, and the Distribution of Personal Well-Being, 1959-1989. *Demography, 32*(3), 379-405).

Estimates of equivalent income allows each child to be treated as though he or she received

an income equivalent to the ratio of total family income divided by a measure of equivalency. In this paper I adopt the measure of equivalent income presented by Karoly and Burtless. Karoly and Burtless define adjustment income per person as:

$$Y_a = Y_u / (F/H \times H^{Q})$$

where Y is the unadjusted total family income, F is the number of persons in the family, H is the number of persons in the household, and is the adjustment for family size. Following Karoly and Burtless we assume that is equal to 2. An adjustment for family size implicit in the official poverty thresholds. In 1989, the official poverty threshold for a family with four members was almost twice the threshold for a unit with one member. This difference suggests a quadrupling of the unit size doubles the unit's income requirements. I have estimated individual family incomes using the Karoly and Burtless definitions. Figures 3 and 4 present adjusted income for children under age 18. The data for Figures 3 and 4 are from the 1990 census microdata files. For an elaboration and more detailed discussion and some critical comments and an extension of this method see Tukufu Zuberi and Quincy Stewart (Forthcoming) On Race, Poverty, and Inequality Among Children.

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